

Issue IV, Fall 2015**The Crossing**

(A Short Story by Holly Rutledge)

I have crossed the line one too many times. There is a line that divides this place from its opposite. The line is always there, yet constantly changing and moving. I decided to leave the comfort of the world touching my feet, as if I were a plant able to move about the garden. I have leapt over the line into the uncertain, unforgiving and mysteriously large area of liquid on this planet. It is enjoyable, yes, to feel that I am insignificant and so very small. To leave all I know behind and be alone, the only things surrounding me, every one, is infinite—yet I am not. I can look back and see the lights of the land-dancers fading in the distance. They are irritating to me, even though they represent other life. It's not long before they are completely gone. I feel like a scavenging insect trying to figure out the universe, because all I can see is darkness. I have no evidence which I can investigate thoroughly.

There are so many stars I cannot count them all. The sky and water go on for as far as I can see, they appear to have no end. I do not belong here. I am far away from the natural habitat that was intended for me. It feels dangerous yet exciting. I am an alien in this mysterious, exotic place that is foreign to many humans like me. None have left footprints here before me and I will leave none now. However, I am no Christopher Columbus, I am not the first to come to the Gulf Coast waters. The parting of the water as the boat pushes forward is devoured almost as fast as it is created. The ocean does not want evidence of human contact left here. Tonight I will make her happy. There is nothing familiar around me, except for the boat. It is a ragged one, but it serves its purpose.

This boat belonged to my father, who used to come here for the 'catch of the day' and bring it back to the land-lovers who inadvertently paid most of our bills. I miss my father, and I come here often to remember him, where he

loved to be. I love it here, and I always dread going back to the earthy surroundings of sand and trees. Although majestic, magnolias and pines have long begun to bore me. Nature is of course, beautiful in all its ways, except for the humans. They are often greedy, selfish and dirty people and they do not bond well with nature. No—they mostly destroy it. Under this water I am on there are many things that once belonged to humans. The water has turned ugly because of them and their carelessness. It's true—other humans have tried to rescue the water that is so discolored and concealing debris, but it is too large a task for so few, and they do not have efficient equipment to do so. Efficient equipment does not exist because this place is far too vast to control. You see, the ocean will take what humans put in her reach, and she is not so giving as to easily return it. She does not like to give, she likes to take. She will swallow it and it will never be seen again. It is a song and dance that humans play with her. She is sometimes angry, but always merciless. Tonight, it will be different because I won't argue with her. Tonight I will sing and she will dance.

I think of all the impudence on the land. How people are so cruel to each other, and I know I have made the right decision. For a few moments I sit and watch her dance. What a spectacular performance! I step out of the boat and allow her to hold me. Her enveloping embrace is deceptively comfortable. As I slowly descend I sing and I can feel her creep inside of me. I sing and sing. The pressure of her fills me and she continues until I can sing no longer. She has taken what she desired of me—and she dances. I am still.... I drift aimlessly along the waves her dance creates. And for eternity—she dances, waiting for another partner.